SPHINX FINE ART

Johann Wilhelm Jankowsky (Austrian 1825 - 1861)

An Austrian Monastery on a River, possibly the Danube

signed 'J W Jankowsky' (lower left)
oil on canvas
73.5 x 100.5 cm (29 x 39½ in)

Johann Wilhelm Jankowsky's view of a monastery beside a river embodies a masterful display of a myriad of different light effects; the architectural articulation which comes from the warm light in which it is bathed, enlivens the surface of the building, whilst the delicate dappled reflection imbues the painting with calm serenity; the pools of rich sunlight and dark recesses of shadow balance the composition perfectly.

The scenery and architectural style of the buildings depicted suggest that the monastery is located on the River Danube. However, the significance of this painting arises not from the topography of the image, but rather from the delicate atmosphere it portrays. There is certainly a sense of calm and serenity about the picture; the still waters reflect its surroundings, while small boats leisurely move over the water without disturbing it. In the foreground, the white of a lone woman's shirt draws the viewer's eye in as we witness her ambling along the river bank, all of which adds to the impression of a calm summer's day. The soaring towers elevate this town from the midst of its flat surroundings. Their verticality is balanced by the horizontal line of the boats and the protruding spit in the river in the foreground.

Relatively little is known about J. W. Jankowsky other than that the small body of extant work is of very high quality. Jankowsky's *Viewof Venice,* is also testament to his mastery of light, especially in his ability to accurately communicate the reflections in the water. There is, in both images, a great deal of meticulous attention to detail. The buildings in *An Austrian Monastery on a River, possibly the Danube,* for instance, reveal exquisite modelling of the shadow around individual bricks.

It has been written that 'it is the artist's part to love life and show us that it is beautiful, for without him we might well doubt the fact'.[1] Jankowsky's *An Austrian Monastery on a River, possibly the Danube* perfectly articulates this statement visually. The peaceful serenity of the image with its idyllic setting is

surely tonic to any melancholic misgivings as well as standing testament to his conspicuous skill.

[1] Bury, A., *Two Centuries of British Watercolour Painting*, 1950.